

To: The Public Arts Advisory Committee  
From: Kevin Fryer

4/15/23

This last week there was a robust conversation on the Residence of Brisbane page about Public Art. The conversation was curated by Michael Barnes who has a keen interest in this topic. The various threads showed a wide range of opinions. They also showed that the public is largely unaware of the particulars or potential of our Public Arts Ordinance. The following are three contributions that I made to the threads in an effort to clarify and share my thoughts to the community.

*1. I got on the P&R commission in 2011 with the idea of exploring "1% for the arts". Live at Mission Blue was then about halfway through its 15-year run and Dr. Kranna had begun teaching it in his graduate seminar at SF Conservatory of Music. Each year I would speak to his class and talk about how the Performing Arts can be a force in strengthening the fabric of communities. It was an aspect of LMB that I was proud of. I was attending many CC meetings at that time and the debate over the Baylands was front and center. Housing, no housing, Nimby vs. Yimby. Recognizing that development was inevitable I thought that including Public Art funding would help to offset the loss of identity that communities fear when faced with huge development. Public Art could be a force in strengthening our community. The Public Arts Ordinance passed in 2014, and the Implementation guidelines a few years later. The Ordinance has collected significant funding for Public Art, but the Public Arts Committee has been struggling to find its footing. Recently I've been watching the meetings, and reviewing past meetings to try to answer the question; why is Art by Committee such a difficult needle to thread?*

*2. There are two separate tracks by which Public Art can be chosen in Brisbane. Example 1: Amazon retrofitted a building in Crocker Park at the cost of 13 million. One percent had to be allocated for public art. They elected to put the \$130,000 into a "in lieu of" fund and the City has control over the artist and location of installations. Example 2: The Salesforce tower has a large-scale video-based work by artist Jim Campbell. In this example the developer chooses the artist and incorporates it into the building or campus in a way that is both accessible to the public and gives added prestige to the development. When developing Public Arts policy for Brisbane we spent considerable time discussing the second. How do we give a developer autonomy in selecting Public Art but keep some control. Does a developer just add "artistic" signage and call it compliance? We wrote a policy where the developer would have to work with the City, first the Public Arts committee, then a public hearing at the P&R commission and finally approval of the City Council. The P&R public hearing step has since been removed from the process. The development currently underway at Sierra Point should result in funding for Public Art but I've not been able to get a clear answer of what if anything is in the pipeline.*

*3. These are good questions Barbara. The Public Arts Committee is made up of two City Council Members, two Parks and Rec Commissioners and three members of the public appointed by the City Council. Our thinking was that by including CC members, P&R members, and appointed community members that it would give the Arts Committee a broad perspective as we worked to*

*develop art installations in our community. What we didn't foresee is how this would create a structural power imbalance. In reviewing meetings that pertain to Public Art, I came upon a CC meeting where this was discussed. June of 2021. In it, Councilman Lenz recalled that OSEC was originally configured in a similar fashion. City Council, Planning Commission, and members of the public. And that it didn't work well. Only after OSEC was made a free-standing committee did it begin to flourish. I am now of the opinion that the Public Arts committee would be better served if it was a free-standing Committee or Commission appointed by Council and overseen by Council as are all other Committees and Commissions in Brisbane.*